



STATE OF VERMONT
Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Capitol Plaza Conference Center, Montpelier Room, 100 State Street, Montpelier
December 18, 2007

The State Board of Education shall sustain a vision of high skills, creative thinking, and love of knowledge and learning for every student by setting education policy that ensures student achievement in a safe and healthy learning environment.

Approved Minutes – December 18, 2007

Present: Board Members: Tom James, Chair; Ruth Stokes, Vice-chair; Brian Vachon; Kathy Larsen; Fayneese Miller; Jessica Bullock; Tess Savage; Chris Robbins

DOE: Commissioner Richard Cate; Deputy Commissioner Brian O' Regan; Carol King; Marc Eagle; Mark Oettinger; Lindsay Townshend; Bill Romond; Marta Cambra, Linda Hendrickson; Kerry Garber; David White; Pat Fitzsimmons; Susan Hayes; Ed Haggett; Maureen Start; Gail Taylor

Others: Carlene Riccelli, College Board NE Reg. Office; Amy Whitehorne, VSAC; Sherry Gile, VNEA; Neal Muir, UI&I; Richard Hansen, UI&I; Lisa Fournier, UI&I; Rick Hilton, Lyndon Institute; Jim White, ACT; Peter Herman, John Nelson, VSBA; Laurie Malenfont; Control Technologies; Jeff Francis, VSA; Jack McCarthy, FNWSU; Joan Paustian, WWSU; Gail Connally; Barre SU; Steve Perkins, Winooski SD; Nicole Saginor, Marion Anastasia, St. Johnsbury SD; Marilyn Grunewald, FCSU; Martin Waldron, Milton SD; Jill Peck, Steve Sanborn, Linda Blakeslee, ECSU; Robbe Brook, WCSU; Mike Deweese, Judith Prince, CCSU; David Bickford, OWSU; John Bacon, Caledonia Central SU; Retta Dunlap, VBE; Judith Callens, WSESU; Brenda Needham, Windsor SD; Bob McNamara, WWSU; Jake Schuler, FNWSU; Noelle Vitt, Rivendell; James Rademacher, OVUHS Board; Sid Glassner, OVUHS Board; Martha Heath, Westford School Board; Virginia Burley, U-32 Board; Judy Geer, Morristown Board; Cameron Page, Stowe Board; Winton Goodrich, VSBA; Sean-Marie Oller, MAU/SVSU Board

Preliminaries

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance

Tom James, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. He led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item B: Roll Call and Introductions

Chair James and Board members introduced themselves, as did others in attendance.

Item C: Public to be Heard

There were no comments from the public at this time.

Item D: Announcements; Board Member Updates (Chair, Board Members)

There were no announcements or updates from Board members.

Item E: November Monthly Report

Chair James reminded the audience that the November report is available on the Department of Education's Web site at: <http://education.vermont.gov/html/board/schedule.html>. This offers various perspectives and is an opportunity for the Board to share its work with its constituencies as part of the Board's communications strategy and to keep the Board's work in the public eye. There will also be an annual report for those interested – the draft is in process.

Item F: Commissioner's Update (Richard Cate)

Employee Update: Commissioner Richard Cate introduced Maureen Start as newly hired administrative assistant and announced the departure/retirement of Sally Bouffard effective December 31, 2007. He also shared that Mia Karvonides has left the department for employment with the federal OSEP office in Boston and that Marc Eagle will be leaving shortly to accept a position as prosecutor for the Lamoille County State's Attorney's Office. Chair James acknowledged Marc Eagle and wished him the best and asked for a round of applause.

FY 09 Budget Development: Commissioner Cate indicated that the department staff was awaiting final instructions from the Administration, and that a proposed FY 09 budget will be ready for adoption by the Board at the January 15th meeting.

Statewide School Calendar: Cate reported that the Statewide School Calendar committee has decided not to recommend a statewide calendar at this time and that he will inform the legislature regarding the committee's concerns with a statewide calendar. The Commissioner was the only committee member voting on the issue to vote against the motion not to submit a calendar to the Board. There were diverse opinions on the committee and the greater debate was not about WHICH calendar to use, but about using ANY calendar within the constraints of the legislation. Per Chair James, the role of the Board was to neither approve nor disapprove the statewide calendar.

Chair James read a proclamation recognizing Sally Bouffard, the commissioner's private secretary, who began work for the state of Vermont on December 14, 1964. The proclamation was shared with the Board. **Motion:** Stokes moved, Robbins seconded, to approve the proclamation (see text attached). The motion passed unanimously (7-0) and Chair James thanked all for their indulgence.

Item M*: Executive Session (16 VSA, Title 1, §313 (a)(3): Appointment or Evaluation of a Public Employee). Due to guests expected near the lunch hour, it was decided to address this item earlier in the agenda. **Motion:** At 10:02 a.m., Robbins moved, Miller seconded, that the board go into executive session. The motion passed unanimously (7-0). Richard Cate, Mark

Oettinger and Brian O'Regan were asked to remain. At 10:20 a.m., the Board came out of executive session. No action was taken.

At 10:23 a.m., Chair James called the meeting back to order.

Action Items

Item G: Consent Agenda

Document(s): Consent Agenda items

Motion: Robbins moved, Bullock seconded, to approve consent agenda with comment. Stokes commented that the driver education waiver requests (Items 4 and 5) are the types of waivers – providing flexibility and alternate approaches - that the board is interested in seeing with respect to the current transformation initiative. James commented that on page 2 of the November 20, 2007 minutes, under Item D (Announcements, Board member updates), the sentence should read: “.....suggested a Board member continue to attend each ~~executive committee~~ VSBPE meeting to stay connected.”

1. Minutes of November 20, 2007 SBE Meeting

2. a. Capital Construction (Cathy Hilgendorf; Bill Talbott)

<u>Project Number</u>	<u>School District</u>	<u>Amount</u>
C-468	Swanton Town SD	\$24,000.00

b. Milton Town SD (Milton ES) Variance Request and Emergency Award

<u>Project Number</u>	<u>School District</u>	<u>Amount</u>
C-471	Milton Town SD	\$1,100,000.00

c. FY 2008 Construction Annual Prioritized List and Capital Budget Request

3. Union Institute and University Degree Granting Authority (Bob Lorenz)

4. Waiver Request (Driver Education): Bellows Falls UHS (Lindsay Townsend)

5. Waiver Request (Driver Education): Harwood UHS (Lindsay Townsend)

The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Item H: 2007 Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA) Report (Richard Cate, Brian O'Regan, Bill Talbott)

Document(s): Green Sheet; 2007 EEO Executive Summary; 2007 EEO Report

Discussion: Cate noted that under 16 V.S.A. §164(18), the Board is required to “evaluate the equalizing effects of Vermont’s education finance system and school quality standards...and to report to the general assembly concerning the results of this evaluation and recommendations for change if needed.”

The statute requires the report every five years or more often if requested by the General Assembly. The initial report was submitted in April 2001; the attached report, dated October 2007, covers the intervening years. It was noted that: 1) there has been a change in the assessments used – NECAP vs NSRE in 2001; and 2) there are some changes in the literacy level between some districts and the question is whether or not there is causality. In order to do this type of analysis, many factors would have to be controlled for. This report does what it can with the current NECAP data available. Cate noted that he thinks it is pretty clear that spending matters up to a point. The issue with spending is that it is measured on a per pupil basis. This is not an argument for small or large schools, but a fact and does not mean much unless you are comparing schools of the same size. The report is not declarative and, at this point, there is no way to make it so.

Stokes agreed with Cate and noted that the report still manages to show that low-income students consistently lag behind in achievement levels and added that we still need to find strategies to improve results for these students. Stokes also offered that NCLB has succeeded in drawing attention across the entire country as to who is getting left behind. She asked to see data on some successes in Vermont and per Richard Cate, Gail Taylor and the Standards 7 Assessment Team are working on that.

Motion: Miller moved, Larsen seconded, that the State Board approve the 2007 report, *The Equal Education Opportunity Act: Measuring Equity*, for submission to the General Assembly. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Discussion Items

Item I: SBE Focus Topic: School Quality Standards (Richard Cate, Brian O'Regan, Gail Taylor)

Document(s): Discuss Topic (SQS) Cover Sheet; SQS PowerPoint information;

Discussion: Brian O'Regan and Gail Taylor presented an overview of the current School Quality Standards which were revised in 2005. Cate indicated that he believed the Standards, in a transformed system, would need to move from being input-focused to output-based. Gail Taylor stated that the information shared with the SBE at today's meeting highlighted the more specific SQS related to specific course offerings and requirements and student/teacher ratios but does not address the more qualitative aspects of the current SQS. The current SQS allow for graduation based on performance assessment aligned to the *Framework*, but there are no assessments available from the state at this time for this purpose. Required course offerings are covered under SQS, but also under other state statutes.

Cate commented that it is a balancing act between protecting students and serving their needs. There is no "one size fits all." The real questions are what are we trying to accomplish and how much of current state regulation is benefiting students? As a result of the recent SQS surveys, schools have come to realize that they are not meeting all the standards. At this time, waivers are not being pursued until a decision on what is ultimately wanted or needed is made. Cate stated that we would rather see the Board spending its time on policy issues rather than approving waivers.

Chair James commented on making education student-centered, i.e., class size and deciding what size works and what doesn't, and agreed there is no "one size that fits all." James reminded the Board that there are data available for review. It is good that awareness has increased.

Deputy O'Regan noted that there is no set ratio on educators or on computers and suggested that information be sought on what is "good practice" and then decide how to get there. He questioned whether there is dialog and engagement around the required action plans and commented that we want to make sure that the action plans are viewed as important and achievable.

Item J: High/Low Spending Special Education Districts (Karin Edwards, Margaret Schelley and Doug Dows)

Document(s): Discuss Topic High Low Spending Special Education Districts Cover Sheet; Report; Spreadsheets

Discussion: Cate noted that Act 82, Section 10, requires the department to report information on high-and low-spending districts to the Board. Karin Edwards stated that the spreadsheet included in the materials is a compilation, a ranking of supervisory unions, and made the point that high spending does not always equate to improved outcomes for students with special needs. There tends to be a high number of students identified in high spending districts and many of these tend to have disabilities that are more reflective of what is going on in the general education classrooms. High spending exists all over the state, and next to a high-spending district is a low-spending district. High-spending districts are somewhat affected by supervisory unions, but there is quite a range in spending disparity. Seven of the top 10 high-spending schools are also "identified" as schools in need of improvement.

Margaret Schelley reported that high spending is based on specific students and demographics and that some red spots (on the illustration map) for this year might go away over the next two years.

Stokes suggested that some of this is cultural and Dows agreed. Dows added that some districts have been high-spending for a long period of time and there are other systems that are unknowingly supporting high spending behavior. He suggested the need to understand spending at that level of complexity and recognize that in some ways it is symptomatic. The data need to continue to be examined and cost drivers identified so that more cost-effective programs can be implemented to meet students' needs. Kathy Larsen asked if there are any suggestions or recommendations being made to help these districts. Edwards and Dows indicated that department staff are working with districts in this regard.

Item K: Governance Report (Richard Cate)

Document: Act 82 Report and accompanying attachments

Discussion: Section 19 of Act 82 of 2007 directed the commissioner to submit a report, by December 1, 2007, to the legislature describing input received from the department's spring 2006 public engagement process on governance. The public engagement process elicited a good response from school boards and moderate response from the general public. The accompanying survey showed support for governance change, but meetings held with the general public did not. Cate reported that he has been contacted by more people who want change than those who do not

want change. The bottom line is that no one can accurately describe what the people of Vermont feel.

Cate reported that everywhere he goes, he sees schools struggling with what they have, that these schools can not afford to do what they once did, yet communities expect them to continue to that and more. They cannot make the changes needed to reduce costs and become more efficient. In that context, leaving things the same is probably not the way to go. Those opposed are much more vocal, and as long as that is the case, there will not be much change. Cate believes that schools cannot be expected to meet expectations without a willingness to share across boundaries. The submitted report includes Cate's recommendations and if changing governance is not going to happen, then he wants to move forward with transformation.

Stokes agreed with the conclusions except that there might be a time where people might be more amenable to this, through realization or through school closure. Larsen applauded Cate for starting this conversation and the Board for supporting it. She suggested that maybe it needs to be thought about in smaller increments. Robbins suggested strategy first and structure second. Miller commended Cate for the proposal and questioned what impact waiting 10 years will have on future leadership. Vachon questioned if another survey, as suggested in the recommendations, would be an impetus for more conversation. Cate maintained that more information is better than not enough and reiterated that he suggested this to the legislature because no one would trust it to be objective if it came from the department.

Discussion Summary: Chair James suggested that the Board give consideration to supporting a recommendation to the legislature to administer the recommended survey. The possibility of making a recommendation based on the report will be discussed further at future board meetings. Stokes suggested offering to help secure a grant to fund and/or assist with funding this grant, because initial reaction might be funding this survey.

Item L: Wrap Up and Future Agendas (Richard Cate, Carol King)

Document(s): Building 07-08

Discussion: The Board reviewed proposed items for its January 15 and February 19, 2008 meetings.

Items N and O: Desired State Discussion with Superintendents and School Board Members – *How Are the Children? A Step toward the Transformation of Education in Vermont* (Board Members, Richard Cate, Brian O'Regan)

Discussion: Members of the department's leadership team acted as facilitators during these roundtable discussions with superintendents and school board members during the afternoon. Thirty-two superintendents and 17 principals from around the state attended to participated in these discussions. Board members participated in each discussion group as well. Following the hour-long discussions in break-out groups, Board members reported on what their groups discussed. Questions addressed included:

- *As you envision a transformed education system, what current practices should be included that best serve the needs of students?*
- *What new practices should be included?*

- *What questions, issues, suggestions does the document, **How are the Children?...** raise for you that you would want the State Board to be mindful of in its public policy role and as it moves forward toward next steps in this process?*
-

Adjourn

Motion: At 5:30 p.m., Bullock moved, Stokes seconded, to adjourn the December 18, 2007 meeting of the State Board of Education, The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Minutes prepared by Carol King/Maureen Start



**STATE OF VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

Resolution of the State Board of Education

On the Occasion of Sally Bouffard's Retirement as Private Secretary to Commissioners of Education

Whereas, the longevity of your public service, beginning in the Office for Handicapped Children of the Department of Health on December 14, 1964, arriving at the Department of Education in June 1966, and soon thereafter becoming Private Secretary to the Commissioner, is exceptional in modern times;

Whereas, you have shown remarkable loyalty and commitment to 16 Commissioners, 14 State Board chairs, 13 Deputy Commissioners, and hundreds of Department employees;

Whereas, you have provided departmental resources and contacts to members of the Legislature, employees of other departments of state government, Vermont's public schools and their administrators, and an inestimable number of members of the public, and have always done so with grace and effectiveness;

Whereas, for those seeking access to historical departmental materials, or for those needing to know the skills, responsibilities, and accomplishments of past employees, your encyclopedic recall has been indispensable;

Whereas, you continually demonstrate, upon the Commissioner's request, an innate ability to track down anyone at any time, wherever located;

Whereas, your years of compassionate response to those in need, especially to elders who are ill at the end of their lives, is legendary and of deep value; and, with your generous nature, you have benefited countless Central Vermonters;

Whereas, your reluctance to take well-deserved vacations is noted, and, on those occasions when you did, we appreciatively note your adventurous spirit in attending well-played contests at Madison Square Garden, the Meadowlands, Yankee Stadium and Fenway Park; we have learned that you have your sights on seeing the New England Patriots play in Foxboro in 2008;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that we honor your exemplary abilities and commitment, and extend our best wishes for a well-deserved, fruitful, and engaging retirement after 43 years of service to state government and to the students and citizens of Vermont.

Approved by unanimous vote of the members of the Vermont State Board of Education, at Montpelier, Vermont, December 18, 2007.

For the State Board of Education,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas E. James". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Thomas E. James, Chair